



Hyde School: A History

Hyde School History

Hyde School was founded in 1966 by Joseph Gauld as a deliberate reaction to a system of education he believed had become overly preoccupied with students' abilities and talents and insufficiently focused on their character. He feared that the prevailing emphasis on preparation for college was too narrow to constitute the best preparation for life. After sixteen years in independent schools he doubted the correlation between academic success and fulfillment in later life. Hyde School was to become his attempt to search for and foster a correlation which would better lead to such fulfillment.

With no suitable blue-print for a curriculum of character education, the school would begin with a few cardinal assumptions. First and foremost among these was the belief that *"every human being has a unique potential"*. Secondly, there would be every attempt to foster each student's character. The five words which adorn the school shield would serve as a guide:

Courage
Integrity
Leadership
Curiosity
Concern

Every effort would be made to pay attention to these values whenever opportunities to do so presented themselves. Only the focus on character was certain at the outset. The school had its philosophy well before it possessed a facility or a curriculum.

Gauld began searching for sites for a new school in 1965 and eventually located an elegant Georgian brick mansion (built in 1914) surrounded by 165 wooded acres in Bath, ME. The estate had been the home of shipbuilder John S. Hyde who had led the Bath Iron Works to its place as one of the major shipbuilding centers in the United States (it remains as Maine's largest employer). The Hyde family vacated the estate in the forties and made it available to the Pine Tree Society for Crippled Children which utilized it in the fifties and sixties. The advent of the Salk Vaccine rendered the facility obsolete for this purpose and Gauld and his supporters purchased it and began preparing it for a school in January of 1966. Gauld named the school in honor of the Hyde family's support of his vision.

Hyde opened in the summer of 1966 with 40 students for the summer session, a program which continues to the present day. Sixty boys matriculated in September of 1966 to begin the first academic year. Early brochures and catalogues offered a *"Challenge to the Underachiever"*, a theme relevant to the school's history. Gauld had no special ambition to work with this particular student population but realistically saw it as representing his best hopes for enrolling students amid the steep competition among older more established New England boarding schools. Thus, the school began

to carve out a niche for itself which at times has represented a "catch-22". The better its work with this particular population, the more it was to be perceived to be a school exclusively for this population. At times this has been somewhat disheartening as Hyde is sometimes recognized as a school for a particular type of student rather than a school which embodies a particular philosophy. The work that the school has done with a wide variety of students has convinced it that its philosophy is applicable to a broad range of students and families.

From that first year the school grew rapidly. A new dormitory was added in the second year which doubled the student body and a gymnasium was completed in the third year. Hyde was accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in the spring of its fourth academic year (1970). It became co-educational in 1971. Several buildings and facilities were added during the seventies and enrollment steadily increased. Hyde's progress began to attract a considerable amount of national media attention. During the seventies Hyde was featured on *Today*, **Phil Donahue**, **David Susskind**, and appeared in articles in *Time*, *Parade*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Much of these media presentations focused on the school's successful and controversial work with so-called "problem kids". Hyde's first decade was a very productive one and a source of encouragement to Gauld and the faculty.

As the school began to take shape it began to fix its gaze on a higher purpose, that of affecting a national change in education. Gauld regarded Hyde as a model which might be replicated in public and other independent schools in the future. The school has always professed a mission beyond itself. In keeping with this spirit, Hyde spawned an organization which took its name from a statement which its trustees had issued in 1974: "*National Commitment is paramount to Hyde School.*" Joseph Gauld became the Director of National Commitment and Edward P. Legg, a faculty member since 1968, was appointed Headmaster in the fall of 1975. The school and the new organization would work together in pursuit of mutual goals. The Hyde Board of Trustees was to serve as the governing body for both organizations. This relationship was both harmonious and productive during the second half of the seventies. Most of the aforementioned media coverage occurred during this period. Hyde also became known for its performing arts troupe, *America's Spirit*. This original theatrical program featured Hyde students, faculty and alumni in an inspiring presentation of song, dance and speech. Under the leadership of Headmaster Ed Legg, the show was performed at Broadway's Circle-in-the-Square, the Copacabana, the Little League World Series, Atlanta's Martin Luther King Center and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. The high point of this project occurred in 1978 when the troupe conducted a tour of various Job Corps centers in the eastern United States in a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

At the turn of the decade, Gauld and Legg began to hold differing opinions on how the school and National Commitment might continue to work together. It became clear to the Board of Trustees that the two could not work together in a harmonious and productive fashion and Gauld left the employ of the school in the middle of the 1979-80

academic year. Legg assumed full authority of all operations of Hyde School at that time. The effect of the break-up of these two figures on the school was not unlike that of a shattering divorce on a family. Conflicting loyalties were strong and the school began to experience negative after-effects in the years which immediately followed the turmoil. Enrollment began to decline and the school's finances became unsteady. Ed Legg left Hyde two years after Gauld's departure and the school then entered into a succession of Headmasters and a spiral of decline. By the fall of the 1984-85 academic year the very survival of the school was in serious question.

The school opened in the fall of 1984 unclear as to how it would make its payroll for the remainder of the year. Amid this consternation, a group of former Hyde parents emerged with a plan to restore the school to solid ground. The group offered financial support with the proviso that Joe Gauld would return as the chief executive officer of the school. The plan generated considerable controversy within the community but was accepted and the Board of Trustees resigned "en masse" in order to offer the school a fresh start. Gauld returned to the school in January, 1985.

The school limped through the remainder of that academic year. The school that Gauld remembered could now be recognized in physical form only. Enrollment stood below 100, down drastically from its high of 235 only five years before. The faculty had been hired by previous Headmasters and possessed variegated educational and pedagogic philosophies some of which were not in harmony with Gauld's. Few members of the faculty were rehired for the following academic year. Other faculty positions were filled with a new group of teachers and administrators with a team of alumni at the nucleus. Under the leadership of Gauld and the Board of Governors (composed of the aforementioned supportive parents), the faculty began to rebuild the school in the summer of 1985.

The progress that the school has experienced since 1985 has been profound. Enrollment has steadily increased to its current level of 185. Financially, Hyde has produced a surplus in each of the past five years. Three new buildings have been constructed and major reconstruction has occurred in three others, a testament to successful development efforts. Malcolm Gauld, an alumnus and son of the founder, was appointed Headmaster in 1987. Joseph Gauld resigned his position as President in 1989 in order to devote full time to the Hyde Foundation, an organization intended to extend the opportunities of the Hyde education beyond the gates of the Bath campus. Malcolm Gauld assumed the full responsibilities of the chief executive officer at that time.

As Hyde approaches its quarter century mark, the school has seen many changes as it has pursued its mission. While its physical changes in size and facilities first meet the eye, its program has adapted even more profoundly. Two adaptations have been critical ones and are fundamental to a comprehension of the Hyde of today. These are the establishment of the Family Learning Center in 1977 and the adoption of the Hyde Principles in 1988.

It became clear after a decade of operation that Hyde could not foster character growth in its students without involving their parents. Thus, the **Family Learning Center**

was established in order to pull parents into the educational process. The school's work with families has merely uncovered the tip of the iceberg in applying family dynamics to character education but enough has been accomplished to cause the faculty to believe that it is perhaps **the most important contribution that Hyde has made to its original mission.** Many at Hyde believe that the key to improving American education lies not with a focus on the American school but instead, with a focus on the American family. Hyde has evolved to a point where it perceives itself as a school which enrolls families rather than students. This aspect of Hyde was the focus of a recent segment of the CBS program **60 Minutes.**

The Five Words serve as the guidelines for character development. The Five Principles evolved as a means to address the issue of unique potential and purpose in life. The Hyde Community adopted these principles as the result of a year-long project during the 1987-88 academic year:

Destiny	Each of us is gifted with a unique potential.
Humility	We trust in a power and purpose beyond ourselves.
Conscience	We attain our best through character and conscience.
Truth	Truth is our primary guide.
Brother's Keeper	We help others achieve their best.

Students and faculty reflect on the role that these Principles and the Five words play in their lives at regular intervals. They are common topics at weekly peer counselling group sessions and the weekly school meeting. Hyde often describes itself as a community with dimensions of Five words by Five principles.

Malcolm W. Gauld
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